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Baker-Polito Administration Announces \$15 Million in Additional School Funding to Support Hurricane Evacuees from Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands

More than 3,000 students enrolled in Massachusetts K-12 schools after Hurricanes

BOSTON – Today the Baker-Polito Administration announced additional state educational funds will soon be available to school districts that have enrolled evacuee students from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In accordance with Chapter 24 of the Acts of 2018, the administration reported on April 4, 2018 to the Joint Committee on Education and the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means on the calculation and planned distribution of funds to school districts during the week of April 16th.

In January, Governor Charlie Baker filed a supplemental budget bill which included \$15 million in additional local aid to help support the costs of educating students who enrolled in Massachusetts schools following Hurricanes Maria and Irma. Between October and March, approximately 3,000 students from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands enrolled in K-12 schools and currently about 2,400 students remain in the Commonwealth.

“Our administration has been pleased to work with the Legislature to provide this critical support to a number of Massachusetts schools that opened up their classrooms to welcome thousands of students and families impacted by last fall’s devastating hurricanes,” **said Governor Charlie Baker**. “We are grateful for the Commonwealth’s school administrators, teachers and staff who have done a tremendous job adjusting to the unexpected and providing the necessary support so our fellow Americans from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands can continue their education.”

“Teachers and administrators have stepped up to support these students and their

families during immensely difficult times,” **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.**

“The additional school funding announced today will provide vital resources for them in many school districts and local communities throughout the rest of the school year.”

School districts impacted by increased student enrollments will be given aid consistent with the state’s school funding formula, known as Chapter 70. The \$15 million in funding will be distributed in two installments, with the first totaling more than \$6.7 million sent to 107 districts this week. A second installment is planned for distribution in June.

“Our schools have done a tremendous job educating children who were suddenly uprooted from their homes and found themselves in new schools and in a new place. These additional funds will help teachers and administrators provide the best possible education for all the students in their schools,” **Education Secretary James Peyser said.**

The funding fulfills a commitment made by the Baker-Polito Administration to seek additional aid for school districts that enrolled evacuee students and is in addition to the \$15 million included in the Administration’s Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) budget proposal to support school districts continuing to serve students in the next school year.

“This additional funding for these districts will go a long way in supporting the educational needs of our students from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands,” **said Administration and Finance Secretary Michael J. Heffernan.** “We are grateful for the collaboration with the Legislature to provide this important funding for this year, and look forward to working with them throughout the current budget cycle to provide additional support in Fiscal Year 2019.”

“This is essential funding for Massachusetts students and teachers,” **said Senate President Harriette L. Chandler (D-Worcester).** “Students coming from Puerto Rico are some of Massachusetts’ newest residents, and it should be our goal to deliver them quality education. I am very proud that the Senate could play a role to secure these funds and make that goal a reality.”

“The Department’s recent release of guidance on how displaced students can attain Puerto Rican high school diplomas as well as all of the incredible work that our schools have been doing on the ground is a testament of the care and effort that all involved are putting in to ensure that these students are receiving a strong education in Massachusetts,” **Rep. Alice Peisch (D-Wellesley), co-chair of the Joint Committee on Education, said.** “However, this work is not yet done. This funding will enable our dedicated schools and communities to continue providing these students with the supports they need to succeed in our classrooms and beyond.”

The Baker-Polito Administration continues to coordinate hurricane evacuee assistance efforts across state agencies and works daily with the Commonwealth’s 22

Family Resource Centers and other Community Based Organizations/Centers to help evacuees register with FEMA for disaster benefits and provide critical case management support to individuals and families impacted by Hurricane Maria.

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